

Message Text

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ACTION ORM-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SR-02 VOE-00 SCA-01 INSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6566

UNCLAS ATHENS 8788

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SREF, GR

SUBJECT: NON-AFFILIATION WITH THE AUTOCEPHALOUS CHURCH
OF GREECE

REF: STATE 269311

1. SECRETARY GENERAL OF CANONICAL COMMITTEE, HOLY SYNOD OF GREECE, CONFIRMED SUBSTANCE, ALTHOUGH NOT TEXT, OF LAW CITED PARA 1 OF REFTEL. IN ESSENCE, CHURCH OF GREECE DOES NOT WANT ANY PERSON NOT HAVING RECOGNIZED STATUS WITH CANONICAL ORTHODOX CHURCH CIRCULATING WITHIN GREECE AS A GREEK ORTHODOX CLERGYMAN. BECAUSE OF UNION OF CHURCH WITH STATE, THE LATTER SUPPORTS CHURCH ON THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE AND WILL ARREST AND PROSECUTE ANYONE "POSING" AS GREEK ORTHODOX PRIEST IN GREECE.

2. ACCORDING TO ASSOCIATE GENERAL SECRETARY OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF HOLY SYNOD, CHURCH OF GREECE DOES NOT RECOGNIZE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF VASILOUPOLIS OF QUEENS, NOR DOES GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA, NOR ANY OTHER ORTHODOX CHURCH HAVING COMMUNION WITH CHURCH OF GREECE. AS A RESULT, ANY CLERGYMAN ASSOCIATED WITH THAT GROUP IS NOT CONSIDERED VALIDLY ORDAINED AND MAY NOT WEAR THE ROBES OF A PRIEST OR PERFORM ANY OF THE CLERICAL DUTIES OF A PRIEST WITHIN GREECE. OUR INFORMANT SAID THAT PRIEST IN QUESTION MIGHT NOT GET INTO LEGAL DIFFICULTIES IF HE ARRIVED AND CIRCULATED WEARING AS CLERICAL GARB ONLY A COLLAR, BUT
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THAT FURTHER TRAPPIGS WOULD LEAD TO PROSECUTION. HE RECOMMENDED

THAT PRIEST RETURN IN DRESS AND ROLE AS A LAYMAN, IN WHICH CASE
NO PROSECUTION WOULD FOLLOW.

4. BOTH HIERARCHY IN ATHENS AND IN NEW YORK CITY ARE INCENSED
BY ACTIVITIES OF "INDEPENDENT" GREEK ORTHODOX PRIESTS IN U.S.,
USUALLY GREEK CITIZENS, WHO ARE CONSIDERED BY BOTH CHURCHES TO
BE IMPOSTORS. THEIR FUND-RAISING ACTIVITIES HERE AND IN U.S.
ARE PARTICULARLY RESENTED AND MARRIAGES, BAPTISMS, AND OTHER
CLERICAL ACTS PERFORMED BY SUCH INDEPENDENT PRIESTS ARE NOT
RECOGNIZED BY THE CHURCH IN GREECE AND, CONSEQUENTLY,
BY GOG.
STEARNS

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